

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA

Agreed Statement issued by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt
and President Lyndon B. Johnson

During the morning the Prime Minister and senior members of the Ministry have had discussions with President Johnson on matters of major current concern to the two countries.

It has been helpful both to the Australian Ministers and to the President to have this opportunity to take further and in person the continuing exchange of views between the two Governments on these matters.

The discussion concentrated on the problems of Asia, and particularly the problems of Viet Nam. It was agreed that the military position in Viet Nam was now demonstrably such that North Viet Nam could achieve no military victory. It was, however, clearly recognised that it would be necessary firmly to maintain the present military effort until a satisfactory settlement could be negotiated. The fighting could only end when it was clear that the great issues at stake had been secured.

The President expressed warm appreciation for the efforts of the Australian forces in Viet Nam.

In the light of the improved military outlook, the prospects for a peaceful settlement in Viet Nam, and for its social and economic development, were examined in some detail, and in preparation for the Manila Conference due to commence on Monday, October 24. It was agreed that this conference would hear a review of the continuing military situation and prospects but would concentrate most of its attention to considering how conditions could best be established and secured for the future peaceful development of Viet Nam and of Asia generally.

The longer term prospects for the future of Asia were also considered. There was on both sides an expression of continuing concern for the wellbeing of the nations and peoples of Asia, and an emphasis on the urgency of bringing about conditions favourable to rapid economic and social advancement. The return of peace to the region will provide an opportunity to expand and improve the effectiveness of the efforts now being made to this end.

The recent efforts by Asian nations to increase their co-operation amongst themselves in economic and political fields were reviewed. It was agreed that these efforts by the nations of the region, to take a larger hand in shaping their own destiny by co-operation, represented a most hopeful and practical development which would continue to command the support of our two governments.

CANBERRA,

21st October, 1966